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Architecture of Diversity: Using the Lens and Language of Space to Examine Racialized Experiences of Students of Color on College Campuses

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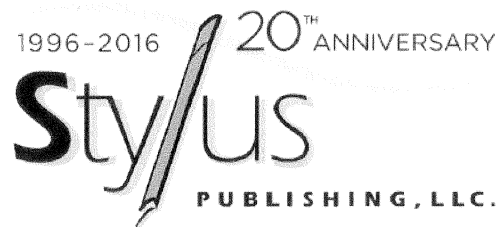
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Transforming Understandings of Diversity in Higher Education

Demography, Democracy, and Discourse

*Edited by Penny A. Pasque, Noe Ortega,
John C. Burkhardt, and Marie P. Ting*

Foreword by Phillip J. Bowman



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ARCHITECTURE OF DIVERSITY

Using the Lens and Language of Space to Examine Racialized Experiences of Students of Color on College Campuses

Michelle Samura

Examining experiences of college students of color is complicated in the current U.S. racial climate. With the prevalence of postracial ideology that suggests we have moved beyond race, the salience and significance of race in higher education, for students and researchers alike, are put into question. Even as students may desire to move beyond race, they still find racialization inescapable (Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Samura, 2011; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andres-Guillen, 2003).¹ Moreover, as we navigate a supposedly color-blind era in which race does not determine people's choices and life chances to the extent it once did, it often is difficult to locate, much less examine, processes of racialization in depth (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Brown et al., 2003).

Scholars of race suggest that updated approaches are needed to account for continued racial inequality and to make sense of these new circumstances (e.g., Omi, 2001; Winant, 2000, 2004). In making the case for new racial theory, Winant (2000) contends an updated framework “must address the persistence of racial classification and stratification in an era officially committed to racial equality and multiculturalism” (p. 180). In institutions of higher education, then, such a framework also would need to address the disconnect that often exists between the rhetoric and reality of racial diversity—a promotion and celebration of the idea of diversity, on the one hand, and the ways students experience it, on the other. In other words, new approaches

are needed to critically examine how students experience, negotiate, contest, and understand processes of racialization.

In this chapter, I argue that an examination of racial diversity in higher education requires serious consideration of space. I propose that a spatial perspective offers a lens for locating and examining processes of racialization. And a spatial approach also provides a language participants and researchers can use to talk about the discreet ways race still operates in everyday interactions, including subtle forms of racism that are overlooked or ignored because race is often understood by students to matter less today. Essentially, a spatial approach sheds light on race relations and racial structures in tangible campus environments.

Drawing on processes of and findings from my research on Asian American college students (Samura, 2011, 2015, 2016), I discuss how a spatial lens locates larger racial meanings in students' lived experiences, concrete environments, and social interactions. I also address how a spatial approach provides an accessible language to discuss experiences of racialization, race making, and racism in higher education. Although the primary focus of this chapter is on the importance of space, I also want to emphasize the importance of more research on Asian American college students' experiences. Including Asian Americans in discussions on racial equity and diversity in higher education is crucial for a nuanced understanding of shifts in racial meanings in the United States (Chang & Kiang, 2002). The complex educational and social realities of students today cannot be fully understood simply through Black-White frameworks (Osajima, 1995). Additionally, Asian American college students are an interesting population to examine because they often are viewed as overrepresented on college campuses. While a number of Asian Americans (of course, not all) are experiencing results of academic success, including socioeconomic mobility and, to a certain extent, social integration, they still experience processes of racialization. In fact, as findings from my research indicate, the dilemmas, tensions, and contradictions experienced by Asian American students reveal the still-tenuous racial landscape of higher education (Samura, 2011, 2015, 2016). Through Asian American students' experiences, we can gain insight into what students of color still must contend with even after inclusion.

In my research, I have found that students tend to not talk about their experiences in explicitly racial terms, and this is especially true for questionable or negative instances such as experiences of racial discrimination. By examining participants' interactions with and views of various college spaces, however, matters of space that also are matters of race become evident. For example, students' tendencies to avoid certain parts of campus can be understood as more than purely a spatial matter. Students may omit or ignore

elements of race in favor of more neutral and less tedious explanations for their interactions with and within space. In this way, students' *dilemmas of space* may also be *dilemmas of race*. The aim of this chapter is to examine and demonstrate exactly what I mean about this dilemma.²

I begin by discussing the concept of space and offer a working definition of *college space*. I also uniquely situate this work in existing interdisciplinary research on space, space and education, and space and race. Then, I draw upon examples from my research on Asian American college students to highlight three ways a spatial approach to examining racial diversity in higher education is particularly effective.

First, I propose that when students feel uncertain about the significance of race and their racial identities, talking about space is more approachable than talking about race. Second, I focus on how different spaces can be experienced and viewed differently by different people. Third, I discuss how space often involves matters of race combined with other forms of socially constructed difference (e.g., gender, ability, sexuality). Thus, a spatial approach enables us to examine the complex links among categories and identities of difference—that is, intersectionalities (Collins & Andersen, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) such as race, class, gender, and sexuality—and illuminate aspects of college spaces that continue to maintain these differences. Finally, I conclude the chapter with thoughts on future directions for spatial approaches in research and practice on diversity in higher education.

Explaining Space

The utility of the concept of space is by no means a new idea. Theoretical and empirical work conducted across a range of disciplines, such as geography, sociology, anthropology, urban planning, and architecture, illustrate how space affects people's interactions and identities (Gieryn, 2000; Gruenewald, 2003; Keith & Pile, 1993; Knowles, 2003; Lipsitz, 2007; Soja, 1989). Critical geographers, in particular, have emphasized a view of space as a social construct and the social as spatially constructed (Harvey, 1993, 1996; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000; Massey, 1993, 1994; Tickamyer, 2000). Space is not neutral, and socially constructed categories of difference often are reflected in material spaces (Massey, 1994; Soja, 1989; Tickamyer, 2000). People shape their surroundings but built environments also affect the types and nature of interactions among people (Gieryn, 2000, 2002; Gruenewald, 2003).

In spite of a sizable body of literature that indicates the great potential of a lens and language of space, research on space in educational settings

remains a relatively underdeveloped area (Gulson & Symes, 2007a, 2007b; Taylor, 2009). Definitions and usage of the concept of space in educational research remain unclear and inconsistent. Especially in the field of higher education, there is still little clarity on how space operates and limited work on the relationship between built environments and diverse students' interactions.

Massey (1993) has emphasized the need for researchers to be explicit about their reasons for using terms such as *space* or *spatial* because meanings of space differ from person to person. People often assume that their meaning of space is apparent or uncontested. Therefore, before moving on it is important that I explain how I define and use the concept of space.

My working definition draws on elements of Massey's (1993) and Knowles's (2003) conceptualizations of space. According to Massey, space is embedded with power and symbolism and is composed of "a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation" (p. 81). Space is constructed out of the "simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global" (Massey, 1993, p. 80). Furthermore, space is "produced by who people are, by what they do, and by the ways in which they connect with other people" (Knowles, 2003, p. 79). It is also important to note that this view of space maintains that it is more than merely a setting, context, or backdrop for where things happen (Tickamyer, 2000).

In my research on college students' experiences (Samura, 2011, 2015, 2016), I use the term *college space* to situate space in the specific context of higher education. *College space*, as I define it, encompasses existing practices, norms, and environments established by institutional policies and student culture. It also involves the connections between past and present meanings of higher education as well as relationships and interactions among people (e.g., students, faculty, staff, alumni) and places (e.g., buildings, landscapes, classrooms). I have further parsed the concept of space into *physical* and *social* to distinguish between tangible, concrete environments (i.e., physical space) and various types and levels of relationships among people or places (i.e., social space). Physical and social spaces often are closely interrelated as social phenomena often have physical manifestations and vice versa.

As I make the case for an updated approach to examining racial diversity in higher education, I focus on space as a concept, location, and experience, and the relationship between college spaces and race making. My reference to the *architecture of diversity*, then, emphasizes the spatiality of diversity and subsequently how students navigate physical and social spaces of higher education.

Studies on Space in Education

In the realm of educational research, space has been given limited attention. Only a handful of educational scholars have engaged in empirical research using an explicitly spatial perspective (e.g., Ferguson & Seddon, 2007; Gulson, 2006; McGregor, 2004; Nespor, 1997). For example, McGregor analyzed classroom spaces to reveal how space is shaped by past practices and is used to maintain and reproduce certain relations of power. McGregor argued that an understanding of the nature of space is important if we are to understand what goes on in institutions of education. Focusing on educational spaces outside of the classroom, Nespor conducted an ethnographic study that situated an urban elementary school within a broader context of the city and revealed the nature of the webs of social relations that connect schools with other social institutions.

In higher education research, it is not that existent literature on college students' experiences has overlooked or ignored the spatial. In fact, a number of studies mention the importance of campus climates, environments, settings, contexts, and institutional conditions, all concepts that are related to space (e.g., Dey & Hurtado, 1994; Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2003; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Kuh, 2009; Kuh & Love, 2000; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). Indeed, a rich body of research exists on the need for campus climates and institutional conditions that are conducive to racial diversity and the means by which they may be created (e.g., Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Solórzano et al., 2000; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

Although this research remains valuable, a number of studies tend to provide only one-time snapshots, via large-scale surveys, of students' attitudes and experiences and are limited in their ability to capture nuances of experiences. Moreover, there remains little clarity and agreement on what exactly constitutes campus climate (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). Existing conceptualizations of campus climate also tend to primarily focus on structural and institutional aspects of higher education diversity (Hurtado et al., 1998). Even when scholars have sought to examine the ways college transforms students *and* students transform college environments, such as Dey and Hurtado's (1994) use of a social ecological approach, the primary focus is on the ways students help shape the institutions (i.e., through changes in student demography and preferences) rather than on explicit, recursive processes between students and space. In essence, research on college students' experiences has not prioritized space as an explicit dimension of analysis.

One large-scale study of diversity in universities that began to explore college space is worth mentioning. Duster (1991) reported that the research

team made a small attempt to map areas of campuses where there were “clear demarcations of racial and ethnic ‘spaces,’ areas where one or another group dominates in terms of who ‘hangs out there’ or where other groups ‘vote with their feet’ regarding spatial domination” (p. 7). In the end, the research team did not pursue this line of inquiry but suggested that it would be very useful to explore where explicitly racial spaces are and how they are created and maintained. Explicitly racial spaces certainly are important to consider when examining racial diversity in higher education. However, the spaces in which race does not seem to be a factor also are important, if not more important, to consider because they check and even challenge our assumptions about how racialization and racism operate.

Connecting Race and Space

Scholars from a variety of disciplines are making implicit and explicit connections between space and race (e.g., Delaney, 2002; Gilmore, 2002; Heikkila, 2001; Knowles, 2003; Kobayashi & Peak, 2000; Lipsitz, 2007; Massey, 1994; Neely & Samura, 2011; Pulido, 2000; Woods, 1998). Most applicable to this investigation is the theorization of race-space connections by Lipsitz, Knowles, and Neely and Samura. Specifically, Lipsitz uses the phrases *spatialization of race* and *racialization of space* to underscore the fact that “the lived experience of race has a spatial dimension, and the lived experience of space has a racial dimension” (p. 3). He further suggests that understanding the links between space and race involves an examination of concrete spatial and racial practices. Knowles also connects race and space by suggesting that space be understood as an “active archive of the social processes and social relationships composing racial orders” (p. 80). Space connects the racial past to the racial present, and it interacts with people and their actions in ways that create and recreate race. Furthermore, Knowles contends that race making is a set of spatial practices.

Building on race-space connections being made by Lipsitz (2007), Knowles (2003), and others, Neely and I (2011) suggest that a spatial approach to examining issues of race is particularly useful because the primary characteristics of space (i.e., contested, fluid, interactional, and defined by difference) overlap with primary characteristics of race. We have developed a theoretical framework of racial space that enables researchers to examine race relations and processes of race making in a variety of settings, especially when it seems uncomfortable or unfitting to explicitly include race as a factor. The frameworks I have mentioned here indicate how a spatial perspective can unearth how built environments affect the types and quality of interracial interactions and, in turn, how social relations affect physical space.

So what might we be able to better understand about students' experiences of racial diversity on college campuses through a spatial perspective? In the next section, I present three compelling examples from my research on Asian American college students' experiences to demonstrate the utility of using a spatial approach to examining and understanding racial diversity in higher education (for more details regarding this study, see Samura, 2011, 2015, 2016). All names of people and institutions used in these examples are fictional.

Example A: Belonging, Entitlement, and Contesting Restroom Space

This first example focuses on Beverly's experience in the residence halls. During an interview, I asked Beverly to talk about college space at West University and where she felt comfortable and uncomfortable. As she spoke about various buildings on campus, Beverly mentioned a particular residence hall, named Acacia, that she did not like. What made Beverly's discussion of the residence hall particularly intriguing was the way she spoke about highly racialized experiences and what could be understood as racist experiences in purely spatial terms.

Specifically, I had asked Beverly to tell me about college spaces where she did not feel comfortable. The following is a transcript of part of the conversation that ensued; my initial analysis is included as bracketed, italicized comments.

Beverly: [pause for several seconds] Probably Acacia (brief strained chuckle).
[*Indication of discomfort.*]

Beverly: [pause] Because it's just so dead. Because I lived in Acacia my freshmen year, I really didn't like it. So I always have a *bad* impression of it.

Michelle: [softly] Yeah.

Beverly: And just the whole thing, like I hated Acacia. So I didn't want to go in there. [*There was a notable heightened shift with significant intensification during Beverly's explanations of why she did not feel comfortable in Acacia. First, she commented that the residence hall was "just so dead" and that she had "a bad impression of it." Second, she stated that she "really didn't like it." And then the intensity of and palpable distress in her statements quickly escalated to a point where she declared that she "hated Acacia."*]

Michelle: So why did you not like Acacia?

Beverly: Because my floor people were really snobby.

Michelle: Hmm.

Beverly: And then they were really mean.

Michelle: Oh no.

Beverly: Yeah, so I didn't want to go there. I was never in my room.

Michelle: Was it a special interest floor? [*I asked this question as a way of trying to get a clearer picture of the types of students who lived on her floor, such*

as racial, ethnic, and gender makeup. However, I did not want to assume that there were racial or ethnic differences between Beverly and the other residents and was waiting to see if she would bring up these topics.]

Beverly: No.

Michelle: It was just a regular floor?

Beverly: Yeah, it was just a regular floor.

Michelle: They were just mean to you? *[At this point, I was still unclear about what was going on but did not want to lead Beverly toward any particular explanation.]*

Beverly: They were just . . . like they were . . . I don't know. [pause] Just like . . . there's a restroom right in front of my room."

And that was when Beverly brought in the restroom as a way of explaining the tenuous relationship with her floormates. Beverly began by describing the spatial arrangement of the floor and the different rooms in the vicinity of the particular restroom. The restroom of interest was located on her floor, directly across from her room. Beverly was adamant about pointing out the proximity of her room to this restroom: "If I open the door, the restroom was *right* there." The fact that she made such an effort to repeatedly and strongly emphasize the close proximity between her room and restroom was meant to validate an assumed entitlement she felt with that restroom. Beverly even commented that all the restrooms on the floor are public restrooms. In her mind, anyone could use any of the restrooms. And given the location of the restroom to her room, logically it would be the one she would use.

Beverly's floormates, however, chose to contest this space—a physical space (i.e., a residence hall floor) that was supposed to be relatively inclusive and a particular place (i.e., a public restroom) that was typically accessible to everyone. For reasons that did not seem clear, at least from Beverly's discussion of the situation, several girls who lived on her floor posted two signs. The first, placed on the restroom door, declared, "This is Jen, Katie, and Ashley's restroom *only*." The second sign, which they placed on the inside of the restroom, stated, "Since we don't poop in your restroom, don't poop in ours. Please clean up your mess. We're not your mom. We don't pick up your shit. Please don't leave your stuff here. This is our restroom."

Throughout her detailed accounts of the situation, there was no explicit discussion of race in her descriptions of the struggle over the restroom space. However, this did not mean that race was a nonfactor in the situation. In fact, Beverly's transition between the discussion of the restroom contestation and the information she then chose to divulge indicated that race, particularly her Asian racial identity, was definitely on her mind. Immediately after describing the bathroom situation, Beverly shifted the discussion to a different but related topic that was explicitly racial. Beverly abruptly ended her

discussion of the restroom contestation by stating, "I just was like, okay, you don't have to do that." Without a pause, she continued on into another topic regarding her relationship with her floormates:

And then, like, my roommate, she's half Japanese, half White. And they didn't know, so they were like always making fun of Asians in front of her and then so she'd be really uncomfortable and then she'd tell me. And I'm like, "Okay, what is this?"

It seems that Beverly was, in fact, acutely aware of her floormates' attitudes toward Asians, and subsequently, their attitude toward her. However, this was the first time Beverly mentioned race in the discussion of her experiences in the residence halls; yet even in this discussion, the racial identity she directly commented on was not her own. Rather, she chose to talk about her roommate's biracial identity. And it was only later in the conversation that I learned that Beverly's floormates were White. Even then, I was the one who asked about their racial identities. It was not information Beverly independently chose to share.

The way Beverly elected to bring race into the conversation—that is, following a discussion of the disturbing experiences with the restroom that focused on her roommate and not on herself—illustrates how examining race on college campuses can be complicated. Sometimes the reasons provided by students seem to indicate that race is a factor. Other times, individuals are left to their own devices to make sense of occurrences. Race, then, becomes one of a number of reasons for their experiences. Although students primarily wrestle internally with the role race plays in their experiences, many may wonder whether something happens (or did not) because of their race. In Beverly's case, she was left to decipher questions like, "Did that happen because I'm Asian?"

Conflicts over space often are based on assumed belonging or entitlement (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Knowles, 2003; Perrucci et al., 2000). By posting the signs in the bathroom, Beverly's floormates established an *us* versus *them* divide. It was a process of *othering*, and the otherness seemed to be connected to their racial identities. In this way, Beverly's restroom contestation was not only reflective of the campus racial climate or race relations at West University but also a race-making event. Furthermore, we see how racialization is experienced and understood by Beverly. Her retelling of and response to these racialized experiences revealed how uncomfortable and even unwilling she was about talking about her own racial identity in the midst of that difficult experience. The restroom contestations were so traumatic that in the end Beverly and her roommate chose to remove themselves from that

space entirely. Had I directly asked Beverly about the role race played in her college experiences or whether her Asian American racial identity seemed to matter at West University, I am uncertain about whether she would have talked about the restroom contestation. In this situation, Beverly was able to talk about space as a way to explore her experiences with race on campus.

Example B: "Sticky Rice" and Changes in College Space

Space is dynamic. It can change in a matter of moments. In my research on Asian American college students' experiences I found that college spaces, particularly physical spaces, are experienced, used, and understood very differently by different people. In fact, because the institutional and public views of the setting (e.g., student demographics, location, accessibility, resources) were significantly different from students' views of the setting (e.g., "White space" and "party space"), I felt it was necessary to write two versions of the study's setting. Doing this enabled me to more thoroughly capture the wide range of perceptions of West University's college space.

In this next example, I illustrate the fluidity of college space by focusing on a recreation center and a phenomenon known as Sticky Rice. I offer the following vignette from my field notes as a way to highlight the intricacies of college spaces, physical (i.e., built environments such as a recreation center) and social (i.e., relationships and interactions among students).

West University's recreation center is one of the most frequented buildings on campus and was designed to always allow drop-in recreation use. This means that, at any given time, students, faculty, and staff have access to a wide range of exercise equipment and activities. On most days the recreation center is bustling with a diverse group of people, especially the basketball courts. Located in the center of the building, the two courts are often packed as undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and community members engage in hours of nonstop pickup games.

But not on Saturday nights. On Saturday nights, the basketball courts became a space where a large group of Asian American students congregate to play. They jokingly referred to themselves as "Sticky Rice." While most other students engaged in some other recreational activity on these nights, these students preferred this space to enjoy one another's company. Although they were still able to play on other days among other university patrons, they preferred to play on Saturdays.

Little is known about how this phenomenon came to be. According to Martin, a sixth-year "super senior" who had been around the longest, certain Asian American students somehow flocked to the basketball courts on Saturday nights. No one sent out formal invitations or reminders, but there usually were enough bodies to simultaneously run two full-court games with extra people waiting on the sidelines.

The Sticky Rice phenomenon highlights the complex relationship between college spaces and students and between physical and social spaces. It provides a useful starting point for considering how experiences such as these can help us rethink the ways we view higher education settings and the salience of race for students of color. For example, consider these questions: Why does Sticky Rice exist? How does the recreation center on Saturdays enable and constrain Sticky Rice? And what might we better understand about students' experiences of racial diversity if we examine the range of uses, experiences, and meanings of different spaces in the recreation center and beyond?

Sticky Rice can be viewed as primarily a spatial phenomenon. That is, the same physical space (i.e., the basketball court) is experienced differently by different groups of people at different times. Some people, including academics, third-party observers, and even members of Sticky Rice, would argue that the Saturday night basketball games at the recreation center have little to do with the students' racial identities. Perhaps students came out to play on Saturday nights because their skill level keeps them from being picked up by the constantly morphing teams during the week. Or maybe it was because the students simply preferred to play basketball instead of attending parties. Still others might suggest that students merely choose to *stick* together with people whom they believe are similar.

We know from a rich body of research on racial diversity in higher education that racially diverse student populations do not necessarily result in interracial interactions (e.g., Bowen & Bok, 1998; Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2005). In fact, studies have shown how many students in multi-racial settings, for a variety of reasons, such as assumed shared experiences and perceived similarities, tend to prefer and develop close associations with same-race peers (Inkelas, 2004; Tatum, 1997; Villalpando, 2003). Same-race living arrangements, campus clubs and organizations, fraternities and sororities, peer groups, and dating patterns are often the norm on campuses with racially diverse student populations.

At the same time, the role of formal, university-sanctioned race- and ethnic-based student organizations in the experiences of students of color also continues to be debated. Scholars have suggested that clubs and organizations that focus on race or ethnicity limit students' interracial interactions and deter from efforts to promote racial diversity (D'Souza, 1991). Other scholars have argued instead that ethnic and racial student organizations are an important factor in the experiences of students of color, helping them to adjust to college life, develop greater awareness of their racial identities, and increase their sense of belonging (Inkelas, 2004; Museus, 2008). In fact, some scholars have suggested that these types of race- or ethnicity-based groups are critical for the retention and success of students of color, that it is more about self-preservation as opposed to self-segregation (Villalpando, 2003).

In this way, Sticky Rice also can be understood as a racial phenomenon, not just a spatial phenomenon. The basketball courts became a type of Asian American space on Saturday nights. That is, the space changes as a result of and resulting in changes in racial composition. It becomes *their space*. Moreover, the space encompasses a specific moment in time and a particular location when Asian American racial identity becomes salient to Sticky Rice, as these students are drawn to the physical and social space. Asian American racial identity also is salient, since observers likely viewed the Saturday night basketball ritual as an Asian or Asian American space.

The examination of Sticky Rice through a lens of space is an example of how a physical space can change in composition and meaning depending on the day and time. This suggests that to fully understand students' experience with racial diversity on college campuses we must consider how, when, and why spaces are used, by whom, and with what outcomes. For example, a number of higher education scholars also would suggest that Sticky Rice illustrates students' efforts to belong. If Sticky Rice is one way a particular group of students works to belong, it would be useful, then, to examine students' belonging as a set of spatial practices (Samura, 2016). As the Sticky Rice phenomenon indicates, there are aspects of student belonging that may be better understood in relationship to space.

Example C: Bodies in Space and Intersectionalities of Difference

The final example is centered on Missy's understanding of her racialized and gendered body in college space. Two points need to be emphasized with this example. First, examining college students' experiences with diversity requires approaches that can account for intersectionalities of difference (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class). I contend that a spatial approach enables a more nuanced understanding of how these intersectionalities affect students' experiences. Difference is maintained through space. As value (positive or negative) is assigned to particular differences, inequality is produced in and through space. These inequalities are frequently established along the lines of social identities, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, or some combination thereof.

Second, additional methods that unearth how students navigate, experience, and understand college spaces are needed, especially when different identities become salient. I propose that visual methods (e.g., photography, mapping) offer insight into these processes. Surveys are by far the method of choice for research on diversity-related topics, such as campus climate, retention, and belonging. As valuable as surveys are for providing a landscape view, they are limited in their ability to consider the dynamic nature of students' experiences. So in this study, I used an unconventional combination

of student-created photo journals, mapping, and interviews in addition to analyzing large-scale survey data. (For more information on methods see Samura, 2016. For more information on visual methodologies, see Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2003; Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Suchar, 1997.)

One theme that emerged from the photographs taken by the photojournalers was a struggle with being highly aware of one's body on campus and in the neighborhoods surrounding campus. Many students, especially the photojournalers, highlighted various aspects of their physical appearance as a way of talking about how they experienced college space. A number of participants referred to their physical attributes, particularly their weight, to describe their relationship with college space. I should also note that for many of them, college space included university-owned property as well as the surrounding neighborhood or city where the university was located. Two images taken by Missy were prime examples. The first image, "24hr Fitness" (see Figure 9.1), was one of Missy's responses to my request to take photographs in places where she does not feel comfortable.

Missy's photo "24hr Fitness" is visually compelling in that the long walkway and the doors in the distance suggest a metaphorical distance between Missy and this place. One can literally see her perspective of the 24hr Fitness center. Missy also provided written notes to accompany this photograph.

I'm not comfortable in [this city] at all! Everyone is stick skinny and/or anorexic looking. I have been diagnosed w/bulimia since middle school and this picture represents what I have to do to feel comfortable with myself in order to feel comfortable in other environments.

Missy then added, "I hate the gym. But I go at least four times a week."

Along with "24hr Fitness," Missy provided another image titled "Treadmills" (see Figure 9.2), to comment on salient aspects of her identity. "Treadmills" depicts a row of about 20 treadmills on the right and another long row of elliptical machines on the left side. With this image, Missy noted,

Weight is a part of the identities that matter at West University. I've never met so many in-shape people. I'm in shape, but not skinny, which Asians are required to be. Every girl seems to worry about it and guys are always trying to bulk up! All my friends have protein powders! I was always self-conscious, but never to this extent. All the girls are scantily clad. . . . I'm not in competition, but I always feel out of place because I'm too self-conscious of my weight.

FIGURE 9.2. Missy: “Treadmills”



the norms of their own racial category. Concomitantly, gender also becomes salient when bodies differ from the expected norms.

By examining how students' views of themselves align (or not) with their understandings of the expectations of different college spaces, we can better understand students' experiences with diversity. Furthermore, we can better understand which intersectionalities of social identities are prevalent for different students and how difference is reproduced and maintained, even in diverse settings.

Closing Thoughts

My hope is that the issues and perspectives I have raised in this chapter will, at the very least, catalyze conversations and inquiries on the utility of spatial approaches in educational research. As the preceding examples have shown, it is difficult to examine the salience of race in students' everyday experiences. Beverly's experiences reveal how tricky and uncomfortable it may be

FIGURE 9.1. Missy: “24hr Fitness”

for students to talk about race in questionable interactions. Therefore, students may need to talk about space to talk about race.

Beverly's discussion of the residence hall restroom contestation became a moment when space served as a proxy for race; that is, she talked about space as a way of discussing her belonging (or lack of) in the residence hall. When we are able to examine how students experience interracial interactions, even if race is not explicitly discussed, we can better understand how difference and potentially inequality along the lines of race are maintained and perpetuated. Similarly, the lack of fit revealed through Missy's photographs and comments uncovered the racialized and gendered expectations of West University's college space. Examining expectations of students' bodies in relation to particular spaces may expose processes of racialization (along with other layers of difference) that continue to exist, even in a space that is assumed to promote inclusivity.

There are a number of ways future researchers may want to use and extend spatial approaches. For example, scholars can reexamine concepts related to racial diversity, such as campus climate, belonging, retention, and the like, using a lens of space or the concept of college space. What might we be able to better understand about students' experiences if we examined belonging and retention as a set of spatial practices? Or what aspects of campus climate might be unearthed if we examine how different students use, experience, and understand different college spaces? Researchers also can draw on theoretical frameworks that explicitly connect race and space to examine racial diversity on college campuses. For instance, future research can use the theory of racial space (Neely & Samura, 2011) to examine how college space (and subsequently students' experiences with race) is interactional, fluid, contested, and defined by difference. Insights gained through this research could inform higher education policy, practice, and programming. Further, it is important for scholars to consider critical geography and visual methods (e.g., photography) to provide alternative research approaches that may help us deepen understandings of racism and sexism on college campuses.

Findings from studies that examine college space can help administrators, campus architects, designers, and planners better understand how different spaces are used and experienced by different constituents. This research also can enable key decision makers to make more informed decisions about changes to be made and future projects and programs to facilitate student belonging, inclusion, and success. Scholars, practitioners, and even students would benefit from understanding how changes to campus spaces can in turn change interactions in those spaces and vice versa. Obviously, it may not always be feasible or even necessary to alter built environments. For example, an existing recreation center, such as the one described in the Sticky Rice

example, likely will not be significantly altered or transformed into another purpose. However, if research reveals patterns of racially segregated usage of the gym, it would be important for administrators to consider why this may be occurring and whether programmatic changes can or even should be made.

Along with the challenges of examining racial diversity in higher education today come opportunities to reexamine and revise our approaches to address the needs of all students. As we better understand how different college spaces promote or impede meaningful interactions among students, changes can be made to space to more effectively facilitate inclusivity in racially diverse settings. To do this, we need updated frameworks that can capture the complexities of students' experiences. A spatial approach is particularly promising.

Notes

1. Racialization refers to processes by which racial meanings become attached to individuals, groups, and even spaces. Processes of racialization often perpetuate otherness and reinforce a racial hierarchy (Winant, 2004).
2. All names used in this study are pseudonyms. This includes names of individual participants and the university.

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